



The Commissioner's REPORT

New Jersey
Transportation
Highlights

**Commissioner
Jack Lettiere**

February 2005

**Acting Governor
Richard J. Codey**

Reauthorization of federal bill is vital to New Jersey and the nation

With hundreds of infrastructure improvements, safety upgrades and public transportation initiatives under way in our state, we cannot ignore how vital the federal funding component is to New Jersey's transportation capital program.

While the New Jersey Transportation Trust Fund provides nearly half of the \$2.6 billion necessary each year to enable the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) and NJ TRANSIT to continue their missions, approximately \$1.4 billion of the capital program relies on funding provided by the federal government.

This funding source, known as TEA-21, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, is now overdue to be reauthorized, updated and enhanced. To see how much this delay is costing New Jersey, click on www.njdot.nj.gov.

America has a long history of investing in transportation because it constitutes the infrastructure of our economic system. Transportation drives our country's economic growth and global competitiveness, and affects our quality of life.

Reauthorization of federal transportation program funding by Congress must be a priority so we can continue to protect and improve transportation safety, repair and enhance our systems, and serve and meet the mobility needs of our drivers.

Investments in transportation are investments in people. New Jersey's transportation network is the vital means through which our children return from school, seniors and the disabled

gain mobility and commuters have affordable mass transit options to get to work. Every American is affected by the funding and program delays. Disinvestment will also harm future generations.

As the newly installed president of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), I will continue to lead the fight not only to ensure that New Jersey receives an equitable share of federal transportation dollars, but also challenge our federal government to solidify its commitment to increased transportation funding and sound transportation policy for the nation as a whole.

Working with our Congressional delegation and other national leaders, I will strongly urge them to make transportation funding a top priority to provide a reliable transportation system to the citizens of New Jersey and the nation.

The issue of transportation financing across the country will continue to be a source of fierce debate in the coming months. However, there is little disagreement that there is a critical need to maintain the bridge, highway and public transit network to preserve and improve the economies of the state, region and nation, as well as the quality of life for all our citizens now and in the future.

With a coordinated effort, we can accomplish the goal of addressing our state's and our nation's transportation needs.

Commissioner Lettiere becomes AASHTO president

Just a few months after his appointment as Vice-President of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), Commissioner Jack Lettiere was the first New Jerseyan appointed AASHTO President on January 10.

Lettiere assumed the position when J. Bryan Nicol of Indiana resigned.

"Commissioner Lettiere is well-known to the state transportation community, particularly in his leadership in the strategic planning

effort and in the areas of financial management and planning," said AASHTO Executive Director John Horsley.

He will host AASHTO's national spring meeting in Atlantic City in May. The four-day conference will draw CEOs and policy makers from every transportation department in the nation.

AASHTO, a nonprofit nonpartisan association founded in 1914, represents transportation departments in the 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. It supports transportation by air, highway, public transport, rail

and water. It also plays a critical role determining national transportation policy and standards and is currently focused on the reauthorization of the federal transportation bill.

AASHTO's current mission is the reauthorization of federal transportation funding.

Lettiere has served as a member and Vice Chair of the AASHTO Working Group on Financial Issues, which developed the association's recommendations for the reauthorization of the federal highway and transportation program.

NJDOT awards \$67.5 million to 408 towns

We awarded \$67.5 million to 408 New Jersey towns in December to fund local safety, rehabilitation and street improvements. The monies provide direct property tax relief for municipalities that would otherwise be forced to pay for these improvements using local property taxes.

Municipal Aid grants will make local streets safer, pay for needed sidewalks and crosswalks and help revitalize downtown areas. They illustrate our commitment to relieve congestion, improve safety and enhance the quality of life in our communities.

Municipal Aid funding is distributed using a formula based on a town's population and road mileage. NJDOT provides towns with 75 percent of the amount of the grant up front and the remaining 25 percent after work is completed.

Each spring, municipalities are encouraged to apply for funding through NJDOT's Local Aid Division. Applications

cover a variety of projects, including road resurfacing, rehabilitation and signalization.

Municipal governments maintain over 25,000 miles of New Jersey's 36,000 miles of roadway – roughly 70 percent. In many instances, local property taxes do not provide sufficient funds for proper repair and maintenance to these roadways.

The Municipal Aid grant program is popular and competitive. Of 829 grant applications received, the NJDOT was able to fund 408 – or 49 percent – of the requests. We received more \$198 million in requests for the total of \$67.5 million that we were able to distribute.

In addition to Municipal Aid in fiscal year 2005, NJDOT also funded \$4 million for bikeways, \$4 million for Safe Streets to Schools, \$3 million for Centers of Place and \$10 million for the federally-funded Transportation Enhancements program.

NJDOT crews face winter challenges

NJDOT crews and equipment continue to be a match for whatever nature hurls our way, keeping residents safe and commerce moving during the January snow storms.

We expanded our staff of 810 people with 308 volunteer plow operators who hold commercial driver licenses and have received special training in the safe operation of snowplows and salt spreading equipment.

Road crews receive their information from 32 strategically placed weather stations and coordinate with the toll road authorities and the State Police through the Snow Room in our Emergency Control Center at NJDOT Headquarters in Ewing.

NJDOT has 643 dump trucks, loaders and graders. Another 1,400 vehicles can be provided by contractors. More than 130,000 tons of salt and 576,000 gallons of liquid calcium are in stock to take care of almost 16,000 lane miles of state highways.



NJDOT Equipment Operator Scott Huda clears a bridge deck on Route 29 in Trenton following the first snowstorm of the season.



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